

Earl and Fairy's Secret

by Vampiyaa

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Summary: After Banshee gives Edgar the invisible key, the group sets off on a journey to the Land of Ibrazel to discover its secrets.

Along the way, Ulysses emerges, possesses Lydia and tries to kill Edgar. Can Kelpie, Paul and Edgar rescue Lydia from Ulysses' possession? M rated :P

1. Prologue: As the Clock Goes By

Prologue

As The Clock Goes By

London, England, 11:00 pm, Ashenburt Residence

Eleven sharp bongs were emitted from Big Ben. It was an hour to midnight in dreary and grey London, England. Rain rocketed from the grey clouds overhead, splattering the Victorian cobblestone streets. In a stunning mansion, grand and sparkling, on a couch of red velvet sat a rather attractive man, sipping Scotch from an expensive, crystallized shot glass. This man had ash mauve eyes and beautiful gold hair that fell just below his ears. This man also happened to be the Earl of the Blue Knightsâ€| the nobleman of the finned creatures of the sea.

The Merrow were his people.

"Lord Edgar, you shouldn't drink so much," said a deep voice as somebody entered the room.

It was a male who had just passed into manhood. His skin was quite tanned, his hair was black and his eyes were deep, emerald green. He possessed superior fighting skillsâ€| and also happened to have two bloodthirsty sprites dwelling inside his body.

The one called Edgar sighed and refilled his glass nevertheless.

"Bad habits, Raven," he reminded his servant, raising the glass to his lips and downing another shot. "They seem to enjoy resurfacing every time Lydia goes back home."

Raven didn't say anything more but inclined his head, as if he understood what Edgar was going through.

"Perhaps, if you were to invite her over," Raven suggested.

"Ah, I've sat here since she left at noon, wondering whether or not to ask her to spend the night," he said airily, refilling his glass yet again. "And then I decided to spare myself the pain of having her say no by numbing it with my best friend, Mr. Scotch here." He raised his shot glass in the air with one slim hand, toasting Raven.

"Ermine really did spoil me," he sighed. "You're rightâ€¦ I've had quite about enough."

Edgar set the glass down on the wooden table next to the couch and stared into the fireplace, mesmerized by the flames. From his pocket he withdrew an invisible item.

When Edgar, Raven, Lydia, Banshee, Nico and Paul had all been in the fairy world, in Ulysses's evil mansion, Banshee had given this item to Edgar. Before she died she told Edgar that it was the key to the land of Ibrazel. Since it was invisible to both Edgar and Lydia, who because of her fae powers could normally see things like this, tied a neat red ribbon around it.

"You don't want to lose it!" she had laughed. "Because if you do, I wouldn't be able to help you find it." Edgar had been momentarily stunned.

"Beautiful Lydia," Edgar mumbled, rumpling his golden locks and slumping down on the couch. "There's not a second that goes by that I don't wish to hold you."

A/N: Hi im vampiyaa :3 please review, i love reviews!

2. Paul's Paintings & Edgar's Insecurities

Chapter 1

Paul's Paintings and Edgar's Insecurities

London, England, 8:45 am, Carlton Residence

A rusty-haired girl woke at exactly seven o'clock, dressed at seven oh five, ate breakfast at seven fifteen and was out the door by eight. In the minutes between the girl kissed her father goodbye, ordered him to clean up his study, gave a cookie to an already chubby brownie that had been hanging off the side of her gown and argued happily with a fairy disguised as a cat. Her name was Lydia Carlton, and she was a fairy doctor. The fairy cat was her friend Nico.

"Eh, why do you even need to follow the Earl all over Great Britain anyway?" Nico drawled, strutting into the carriage before Lydia. On his grey furry back was a black cape given to him by Edgar.

"Because I'm his fairy doctor," Lydia replied, closing the door and smiling at the carriage driver for him to go. "And I don't think you should be complaining. You look very dashing in that cape."

"Yes I know," Nico said proudly, striking a pose. "But if you ask me, that's not the only reason you're going with him to the Land of Ibrazel. If you were simply his fairy doctor you wouldn't be going with him anywhere, especially a place as mysterious as there. Who knows what man-eating fairies you'll find there?"

"What do you mean, Nico?"

"Don't play dumbâ€" we all saw what happened in the carriage last week. He kissed your forehead and you couldn't have been happier about it."

"Nico!" Lydia gasped, colour flooding her cheeks. "Don't say such ridiculous things!"

"It's true," he said airily, leaning back in the seat with his paws stretched out behind his head. "Plus, you're engaged to him." He jabbed his tail at Lady Gladys's moonstone ring that rested on her finger.

"The only reason I still have it on is because Edgar refused to take it off," Lydia mumbled, turning away and changing the subject. "I hope Paul will come with us on the journey to the Land of Ibrazel."

"If you ask me, ever since Banshee died, Paul's gone completely cuckoo," Nico said bluntly. "Coblynau was floating around his mansion to check up on him and told me that all he's been doing is painting pictures of Banshee every second of the day. He barely stops to eat."

"Nico, don't be heartless," Lydia scolded. "He liked Banshee. She was special to him."

She leaned back in her seat and wondered if Coblynau had seen right. She pitied Paul, reallyâ€" it was terrible what had happened to Banshee that night in Ulysses' mansion. Lydia always felt guilty for thinking this, but in complete honesty she was grateful for Banshee's sacrifice. If it hadn't been for her, Edgar would have probably died.

Nico and Lydia spent the rest of the trip to Paul's mansion in silence. The driver, despite Lydia's continuous statements, helped her out of the carriage and reached down to pet Nico, who accepted it with grace but always complained about it later.

"Wait here, Nico," Lydia whispered, not wanting to startle Paul if he was anywhere near hereâ€| or if he was as unstable as Coblynau stated.

"Fine," he sighed, curling up underneath an antique table.

Lydia cautiously stepped down the hall, towards Paul's room. She heard rather frustrated muttering coming from his door, and she knocked quietly. There was no answer.

"Paul?" Lydia said confusedly, pushing the door open a crack to see Paul bent over an easel and paint pallet, furiously mixing together two paints.

"Lydia!" he gasped, her presence startling him enough to drop the pallet onto the floor and smear a golden coloured paint all over the floor.

"Forgive me, Paul, I didn't mean to startle you," Lydia said, hurrying over to help him clean it up. "What are you doing?"

"I was trying to make amber paint," Paul said embarrassedly, ducking his head so that his walnut-coloured wavy hair shielded his face.

Lydia smiled. "For Banshee's eyes?"

Paul's head snapped up. "H-how did you know?"

"Coblynau told Nico, and Nico told me," Lydia confessed, glancing up at the easel. Painted onto it with rich cool colours was Banshee draped in a silk gown, being carried by little blue winged creatures as she reached for the sky, where two crescent moons sat in a starless, cloudless sky. The only thing left unpainted were Banshee's eyes, which were still white.

"Paul, it's beautiful," Lydia gaped, feeling the urge to touch it but refraining in case the paint was still wet.

"You're always too sympathetic," Paul mumbled, cheeks flushing red again. "I bet Coblynau said I was nuts."

"He did," Lydia admitted embarrassedly. "But Paul, I know how special Banshee was to you, and I don't think painting her after her passing away makes you crazy."

"I'm absolutely bonkers," Paul declared almost enthusiastically, making Lydia want to slap her forehead.

"Too bonkers to come with us to the Land of Ibrazel?" Lydia said airily, a smile playing at her mouth as Paul blanched.

"R-really?" he stammered, beaming. "I can come?"

"If you feel up to it," she said with a smile. "The carriage is waiting outside now."

"Okay, let's go!" Paul exclaimed, leaving the pallet behind, grabbing a piece of parchment, stuffing it into his coat pocket and frog marching out the door. As he walked he turned slowly to face Lydia again. "You know, if your hair were silver and your eyes were amber, you'd look identical to Banshee."

"Eh, really?" Lydia said, trying to catch her reflection in the window and imagine herself with Banshee's features. She admitted to herself that she saw a slight resemblance.

"Yes," Paul said. "Would youâ€¦ I mean, when we get backâ€¦ could you maybe model for me again? With His Honour's permission of course," Paul added quickly, glancing down at the ring on her finger.

"With or without Edgar's permission, Paul, I'd be happy to model for you," Lydia smiled, as he held open the carriage door for her.

* * *

><p>London, England, 9:03 am, Ashenburt Residence

"Raven!" Lydia cried happily, rushing over to greet the tanned-skinned, black-haired man. He addressed her with a bow and a blank face as usual, along with a simple, "Miss Lydia."

"Is Edgar awake yet?" Lydia asked curiously, glancing around.

"Yes," Raven said stonily, gesturing with a sweep of his hand up the stairs. "He is in his room, if you wish to see him."

Lydia bit her lip and took a cautious step forward. Last time she went to see Edgar while he was in his room, he was drunk and nearly had sex with her before whispering out Ermine's name and falling asleep on top of her. She fortified her courage by reminding herself that Paul and Nico were with her, though Nico wouldn't exactly do much.

Once up the stairs she knocked on Edgar's door timidly, while Paul stood nearly covered in shadows two feet behind her. Unlike last time, Edgar didn't swing open the door, half-naked with a drunken smile on his face. This time there was no answer. Lydia cautiously turned the knob and opened the door.

Edgar was slumped over the couch, an empty scotch glass tipping precariously in his left hand, which was hanging over the side of the couch. His shirt collar was open down to his belly button.

"Edgarâ€¦?" Lydia whispered, wondering whether or not to jostle him gently awake, and when he didn't wake at the sound of his name she decided on the former. Slowly she reached out with one hand and placed it on his shoulder, readying herself to push him, but at the moment of contact his eyes opened halfway.

"Lydiaâ€¦" came out of his lips on an almost relieved breath, and he sat up zombie-like and tossed his arms around her shoulders.

"Edgarâ€"!" Lydia cried out, colour creeping up on her cheeks at Edgar's impulsive move.

"Oh Lydia, I was having a nightmare where you were declaring that you were engaged to Ulysses," he sighed, his face buried in her neck.

"Eh, what are you talking about?" Lydia said, sticking her nose in the air. "I'd never marry that creep."

"Good," he declared, tightening his grip. "Because you're mine."

"I'm not marrying you either!" Lydia fumed, pushing him off of her and standing upright again with arms crossed.

"You're wearing the ring," he said happily, as if she hadn't said anything.

"That's because you won't take it off."

"In that case it'll stay on your finger for eternity." Then Edgar smiled charmingly, looking beautiful even with his chest exposed and his golden hair sticking up in places. "Did you come to visit me?"

Lydia took a step to the right, revealing Paul, who waved embarrassedly and said, "G-good morning, Your Honour."

"We're going to the Land of Ibrazel today, Edgar," Lydia explained coolly. "We thought, since you are the Blue Knight Earl, that you'd actually like to come along."

"Today?" he echoed, his giddy features sharpening to seriousness (although that might have been from the glare he'd sent at Paul).

"Well, it's been a week since we came back from Ulysses' creepy mansion," she said, hands on her hips. "Might as well see what we can discover about Ibrazel before we go off hunting the Prince of Misfortune. There might be something there that could give us an advantage against him."

Edgar nodded seriously. "You're right. Paul, would you please leave so that I can dress?"

Paul practically darted out of the hall, while Edgar closed the door.

"Wait, why aren't I leaving as well?" Lydia asked, not sure she wanted to hear the answer.

"Because I don't want you alone with Paul," he said bluntly, approaching her so quickly it made her fall back a few feet in fear. "Also, I'm still a little rattled from my nightmare and I don't want you disappearing to marry Ulysses."

"That's an excuseâ€" you know I'm not going to marry him!" Lydia insisted, staring towards the door. "And I'm not staying here while you change your clothes, Edgar."

He pinned her to the wall again, like he'd done so many times before, so this time it didn't startle Lydia. What did startle Lydia was how he bent over her neck and inhaled deeply.

"Mm, you smell like chamomile," he sighed. For a moment he was overwhelmed by that scent; it made him desperately want to kiss her neck and make her sigh with contentment underneath his mouthâ€| but he didn't, to spare himself a stinging red hand mark on his cheek.

"You keep telling me that," Lydia mumbled, flushing again.

"Well, it's true," Edgar insisted. "By the way, Lydia, when are you going to allow me that kiss you promised in Ulysses' mansion?"

"You already got your kiss," she said stonily. "In the carriage, remember?"

"That didn't count," he said happily. "We weren't home. You said 'when we got home' you'd give me a kiss. Alsoâ€œ!" his hand travelled to her face, where his thumb traced the outline of her lips. "â€œ I didn't mean on the forehead."

"Is that why you're locking me in your room?" she asked, trying to sound irritable but instead sounding nervous.

"Maybe," he purred. "Or maybe I should wait until you're ready."

"That sounds like a better idea."

"But I'll probably die of loneliness before that happens."

"Probably."

He pouted into her neck. "Why are you always so cruel to me, Lydia?"

"Why do you always say you love me when you don't?" she said rather sharply, pushing him off of her. "I'll be downstairs with Paul."

She opened the door and closed it with more force than necessary. Edgar brought one hand up to run his fingers through his messy hair, sighing.

"But I do love you, Lydia," he said despondently, before bustling off to get dressed.

* * *

><p>He went downstairs to see Lydia, Paul, Raven and Nico huddled around the dining table. "What's all the fuss?"<p>

"Paul brought one of his father O'Neill's sketches," Lydia said idly, not turning around to face him. "We think it might be relevant."

Edgar half-nudged half-shoved Paul out of the way so he could take place next to Lydia. The sketch was of a beautiful ocean off the coasts of Ireland, along with a starry sky partially enveloped by clouds. "If I'm not mistaken, this looks rather like a sketch of Ireland."

Paul nodded, trying not to look disgruntled. "It is, but lookâ€œ!" Paul took out a clear sheet of paper, which he set over the sketch, and with a red pen he slowly began to connect a bunch of points together, including the stars and the rocks on the shore. Edgar slowly began to see a pattern.

"Now look," Paul said, pushing away the sketch and pressing the clear sheet of paper against the table.

"It's a map of Ireland!" Lydia exclaimed, unconsciously gripping Edgar's sleeve excitedly.

"And this area here," Edgar said seriously, pointing at the right edge of the map, where a tiny little island sat. "Looks to me like Colt Island, in Dublin."

"You know it?" Paul said, and Edgar nodded.

"Not a very big island, so it's not populated."

"The perfect place to start looking for clues to the Land of Ibrazel," Lydia said, smiling. "Let's go!"

Everyone in the room froze (except for Raven, since he was already stiff as a board) when Paul stomach grumbled loudly.

"I'd take it you haven't had anything to eat, Paul?" Lydia giggled, watching Paul go red in the face.

"Raven, go prepare breakfast for everybody," Edgar ordered with a charming smile, and Raven nodded and disappeared. "Join me on the balcony?" he added to Lydia.

Lydia nodded bitterly and followed him, leaving Paul and Nico alone, and Lydia faintly heard Paul say rather sarcastically, "So I heard you told Lydia I'm bonkers!"

The moment they stepped onto the balcony into the cool morning air, just as Edgar turned to look at Lydia seriously and opened his mouth to say something, a familiar voice drawled out, "If you kiss her, Your Honour, I will kill you and eat you."

The aquatic horse in all his black-haired, blue-vested glory sat with long legs crossed on the railing of the balcony, his nose stuck up in the air as usual.

"Kelpie," Lydia gasped, and Edgar glared.

"Cain, I don't respond well to threats," he said airily, his tone light but his expression sharp as knives.

"Ah, Lydia," Kelpie said gallantly, swooping down off the railing, taking her hand and brushing his lips over her knuckles, all the while smirking. "It's been a while."

Kelpie suddenly few back a couple of feet as Edgar's fist shot out of nowhere and collided with the side of his head.

"Damn you, Earl!" Kelpie shouted angrily, massaging the side of his head as Edgar stood next to Lydia and looked quite pleased with himself.

"Both of you, give it a rest," Lydia snapped irritably. "You're acting like children."

"What do you want, Cain?" Edgar sighed, rumpling his hair idly.

"Isn't it obvious?" Kelpie said, rising up again and putting two hands on his hips. "I want to come to the Land of Ibrazel."

"No," said Edgar immediately, and Lydia shot him a look.

"He could be of use to us, Edgar," she said earnestly, and Kelpie looked proud of himself at her words.

"I already offered to let him into our group," Edgar said lightly. "Remember? But he refused to pull the carriages."

"Don't forget who saved both of your asses from the Unseelie Court in that blizzard," Kelpie warned in a low voice.

"Anyway, I must ask you to leave," Edgar said, sweeping Lydia into a romantic embrace. "Lydia and I are due for a romantic dinner for two."

"Edgar, don't lie," Lydia hissed, cheeks flushing red.

"Ooh, food," Kelpie exclaimed, strolling in uninvited into the dining room.

Edgar sighed irritably and hugged Lydia tightly. "That horse will never let us have our privacy, will he now?"

"Edgar," Lydia said sharply, pulling out of his embrace before looking at him seriously. "Why not let Kelpie come with us? He's part of the Fairy World, and we'll no doubt be dealing with a lot of dangerous creatures. And he did save us, Edgar," she added quietly. "We owe him our lives."

Edgar sighed a third time that day. "Is that really what you want, Lydia?" She nodded. "Then it shall be so, but on one condition," he added with a mischievous smile.

"Okay, what is it?" Lydia asked warily, taking a step back so that her back was up against the wall. He swooped down on her and took the side of her face gently, tracing the outline of her lips with his thumb.

"You have to let me kiss you when we get to the Land of Ibrazel," he purred in her ear. "On the lips this time."

A/N: okay im SO SO SORRY EVERYBODY i know it's been like um about nine months since i've last updated this... but please understand! a) i totally forgot this existed until someone followed it like a week ago (how the heck did they FIND it?! D:) b) i had to rewatch the whole Hakushaku to Yousei series cuz i like forgot all of it ^_^ and c) i already have like four other fanfics unfinished :P well anyway, this will be M rated in the future for smut ;)

3. Amnesty

Chapter 2

Amnesty

London, England, 9:18 am, Ashenburt Residence

"E-Edgar, what are you saying?" Lydia said hastily, looking at the ground with a face red, his thumb still on her bottom lip.

"You heard me," he said firmly. "I'd kiss you right now, but I'm positive you'll probably hit me afterward."

"Th-that's ridiculous!" Lydia stammered.

"Oh, so you won't hit me? Very well!"

"No, I mean it's ridiculous that you want me to kiss you if we find the Land of Ibrazel!" Lydia said quickly. "Weâ€| might not even ever find it."

"Ah, don't worry Lydia, we'll find it!" Edgar assured her, gripping her shoulders and looking confident. "Even if I have to die trying!"

"Edgar!"

"By the way, I never found out whose name I said while I was drunk," Edgar added, making Lydia flush again. "Was it Megara? That was the name of my old babysitter when I was a childâ€|"

"Give up, Edgar," Lydia sighed, brushing him off of her. "It was a long time ago."

"Then you forgive me?" he said excitedly.

She pondered for a moment. "No." Lydia swept off into the dining room again, where the table was set full of expensive breakfast items. Kelpie was stuffing his face and Paul was trying not to watch in disgust.

"After breakfast, we're leaving," Edgar said, sneaking up behind her and placing a hand on Lydia's waist as if it were as natural a thing as breathing. "I'll have Tompkins prepare a ship for us to sail to Colt Island."

"I'd rather not sail," Kelpie drawled through a mouthful of food. "I'll swim."

"I wasn't going to let you on my ship anyway," said Edgar breezily, pretending he hadn't noticed the glare Lydia had shot him.

After everybody had eaten, Kelpie took off, saying that he'd meet them all at London Harbour, and Edgar escorted Lydia out to the carriages, half-ignoring everyone else (especially poor Paul).

"Here Lydia, come sit next to me," said Edgar kindly, helping her into the carriage and scooting in after her.

"Edgar, don't be rude to the others," Lydia hissed, blushing at the special treatment as Nico hopped onto her lap and curled up.

"Oh right, how silly of me," said Edgar, reaching down and gently

petting Nico. "Hello, Nico."

Lydia rolled her eyes as Paul and Raven got in, and the carriage set off.

* * *

><p>London, England, 10:29 am, London Harbour.

"Uwah, Edgar!" Lydia gawked, half-ignoring Edgar's charming beam as he helped her out of the carriage. "This is your ship?"

"Indeed, Lydia," he said, clasping her hand tightly as they gazed up at a colossal ship in the harbour, bobbing gently in the water. "She's called Amnesty."

"Why did you name your ship Amnesty?" Lydia asked confusedly, and his ash mauve eyes skimmed to hers, hinting that she'd just stepped into dangerous territory.

"I certainly need amnesty, don't you agree?" Edgar said softly, before letting go of her hand and striding off towards his ship.

Lydia watched him go with her head cocked to the side and brows furrowed, wondering what he was talking about. Did he mean about saying Ermine's name in his sleep, or did he mean about locking her in the room in the Fairy Realm to face Ulysses alone? Lydia heaved a sigh and felt a hand on her shoulder, and she turned to see Paul smiling at her.

"Are you ready to dock, Lydia?" he said kindly, and she smiled back at him.

"Yes," she said happily. "I can't wait to start getting clues to the Land of Ibrazel."

"Perhaps this will inspire a painting for me," Paul said thoughtfully, and he graciously offered Lydia her arm, which she took gratefully, and he escorted her up the suspended plank to the deck of the ship.

Paul cried out in alarm, and his arm yanked out of Lydia's grip as he was suddenly lifted off of the ground by his shirt collar. A very irritated-looking Kelpie was the culprit, his free hand on his hip, and he was glaring at Paul with his coal-black eyes.

"Oi, don't go snuggling with my Lydia," Kelpie barked at Paul, who was steadily going red in the face as his shirt collar slowly strangled him.

"Actually I agree with Cain," said Edgar, approaching the two of them wearing a look that suggested he wasn't happy either. "Though I don't approve of his punishment methods."

"Kelpie, put Paul down!" Lydia scolded.

"Would you like me to eat him, Lydia?" Kelpie asked brazenly, smirking at her. "You can use his liver for that crap you humans

eatâ€œ foie gras or something like that."

"If you don't put him down now, Kelpie, you're not coming with us to the Land of Ibrazel," Lydia fumed, resisting the urge to stomp her foot.

"Keep him up there a couple more seconds, so I won't have to put up with you for this voyage," said Edgar with a smirk.

Kelpie glared at Edgar and promptly dropped him back down onto the deck. Lydia bent down next to him and helped him up as he coughed, face red from lack of oxygen.

"Paul, are you okay?"

"Fine, Lydia, fineâ€œ" he choked.

"Wonderful!" said Edgar enthusiastically, clapping his hands together. "Off we go then. You, get off my ship," he spat at Kelpie, who flipped him off irritably and dove over the side of the ship.

"Miss Lydia," said Raven's sullen voice from behind her, and Lydia rose from the deck to see her baggage in his hands. "Please follow me, I'll show you to your cabin."

Lydia gave Paul one last concerned look before following Raven down into the lower decks. He led her down a brightly lit hall with an expensive red carpet to the door at the very end and opened it, stepping aside to allow her to go in first.

"I'll leave you to unpack," he said darkly, shutting the door before Lydia could thank him. Sighing, she turned to her luggage just as Nico reappeared from thin air on her bed.

"Is it just me or is everybody hating Paul lately?" Nico drawled, playing idly with the tip of his tail. "Maybe Coblynau told _everybody _that Paul is bonkers."

"Paul is not bonkers, Nico," Lydia sighed again, taking her nightdress and laying it out on the bed. "Edgar and Kelpie are just jealous, and they're taking it out on Paul."

"Maybe they have a reason to be jealous," Nico said knowingly. "Paul's been acting ratherâ€œ friendly, with you, don't you think?"

"That's because we're _friends_," Lydia said firmly.

"Suit yourself," the fairy cat said idly, jumping off of the bed and flouncing toward the door. "I'm going to see if the Earl will give me any whiskey."

Lydia sat down and watched Nico leave with a swish of his tail, wondering if he was right.

* * *

><p>Atlantic Ocean, 5000 miles from Ireland's Shores, 8:58 pm.

Lydia mostly stayed in her cabin for the rest of the day, leaving only when lunch and dinner were served. Now she was idly sitting in an armchair in the corner of her cabin, reading a fantasy book by candlelight. There was a knock at her door, and Lydia closed the book, thinking it might be Nico. But when she opened the door, Paul was standing idly in the hallway, a blush tinting his cheekbones and a small smile on his mouth.

"Hi Lydia," he said, almost shyly. "May I come in?"

"Of course," Lydia said, stepping aside to let him in. "But why?"

"I thought perhaps you'd like to talk," he said earnestly, pulling up a chair and sitting down. "It seemed like you avoided everyone today."

Lydia sat down too and smiled guiltily. "Forgive me, I wasn't avoiding you all. I was just thinking."

"About what?" Paul asked, actually looking interested. Lydia studied him carefully for a moment, wondering if Nico was right. Paul's face reddened. "Do I have something on my face?"

"No, no," Lydia chuckled. "I wasâ€¦ thinking again." She paused. "Paulâ€¦ were you in love with Banshee?"

Her question clearly took Paul severely aback, and they sat in an awkward, stunned silence for several moments. Then he laughed nervously and rubbed the back of his neck. "No, Lydia, I didn't love her. Not as a woman, anyway, more like as a daughter. She was a child, after all."

"I see," said Lydia, smiling warmly at Paul to assure him she wasn't embarrassed. "Doâ€¦ do you really think I look like Banshee?"

Paul nodded almost excitedly, reached over without thinking and softly gripped one of her rust-coloured locks. "If your hair were silver and longer, and your eyes were amber, you'd look almost identical." He leaned over curiously and began to examine her face, tracing his fingers over her jaw and cheek. "You have the same high cheekbonesâ€¦"

Lydia blushed and resisted the urge to turn away. "Paul, you're too close."

Paul's face blanched and he practically hurled himself away from her back into the chair. "F-f-forgive me!"

Lydia smiled nervously again just as there was another knock at the door. Raven's voice sounded from the hallway, "Miss Lydia?"

"Come in Raven," Lydia said, and the door opened and Raven stepped through looking just as surly.

"Lord Edgar sent me," Raven said darkly. "He wanted to know if Paul was in your room."

Lydia cursed Edgar's jealousy and said hotly, "Yes Raven, he's here, as a guest and a friend. Tell Edgar that, and emphasize that Paul is

welcome into my room whenever he wants."

Paul flushed again and Raven nodded blankly, closing the door again. "Miss Lydia, why do you say such things to the Earl?"

"I'm sick of Edgar's petty jealousy," Lydia said moodily, crossing her arms and pouting. "He acts like he owns me."

Paul hesitated. "Aren't you engaged?"

It was Lydia's turn to flush. "I only agreed to get out of the Fairy Realm and stop him from marrying the Queen of the Fairies! Plus, Edgar won't take the ring off," she added bitterly, giving it a useless tug as though to prove a point.

"I see," said Paul. "Then you don't love him?"

Lydia was spared the answer by another knock on her door, and Raven stepped through again.

"He got angry, threw a plate at the wall and said he'd chop off Paul's head if he touched you," Raven said callously, and Paul blanched and Lydia sighed.

"Okay, instead of making you go back and forth as a messenger, why don't you join us, Raven?" Lydia said, smiling. "We'd like to have your company."

Raven paused for a moment at her last sentence before nodding curtly and standing next to Lydia's chair.

"Well now that we're all here, why not play a game?" Paul suggested. "Let's tell secrets."

"Ooh, that sounds fun," Lydia giggled. "Who shall go first?"

"Well, I suppose it's your turn, Lydia," Paul grinned. "You asked me the question about Banshee."

"I suppose that's only fair," Lydia said. "What would you like to know?"

Paul thought for a moment. "What is the story behind that crazy horse-fairy, Kelpie or Cain or whatever his name is?"

Lydia frowned at the memory of him. "He pursued me simply because I was a Fairy Doctor, and to ward him off I asked him to bring me the moon."

"The moon?"

"If you tell a fairy 'give me the moon that waxes and wanes' they have no choice but to leave you alone, since you can't bring someone the moon." Lydia hesitated and glanced down at her ring, knowing that was technically a lie. "Ah, it's your turn Raven!"

Raven blinked blankly back at them as Lydia thought up a question to ask him. She thought of one and hesitated. "Raven, do you miss Ermine?"

There was a pause. Then Raven spoke bluntly and swiftly, "I admit that yes, I do miss my sister. But she isn't constantly on my mind."

"Who is constantly on your mind then, Raven?" Paul asked interestedly.

"I can't tell you that," Raven said quietly. "I care about this person almost as much as I care about Lord Edgar, and it would complicate things if I told you all."

"Fair enough," Lydia said. "You answered the question anyway."

"I wonder what you mean by that, Raven," Paul wondered aloud, rubbing his chin with his hand. "How would it complicate things? And with who?"

"Paul, maybe we shouldn't pryâ€" Lydia began.

The overlapping shouting of two clearly angry males outside in the hall interrupted her, and Raven turned immediately to open the door. Edgar and Kelpie appeared in the doorway, Kelpie's face red with fury. Edgar had his arms crossed, brows furrowed and eyes closed as if trying to block the image of the angry water-horse that was currently shouting at him.

"You're in over your head as usual, Cain," said Edgar loudly, leaning against the doorframe and clearly leaving the fact that everyone's eyes were on him unnoticed.

"_I am not_!" Kelpie fumed, stomping his foot. "It is _you _that is in over your head, you stupid Earl! I love Lydia all the way to the moon, and I _brought _her the moon! All _you_ did was buy her some crappy flowers and dresses. It is I who loves her more!"

"I love Lydia from one end of the universe to the other," said Edgar in an almost idle tone, and when Paul's eyes snapped over to Lydia she flushed. "Educate yourself a little, Cain, and you'll know how much that is. It certainly beats down your subjugation of the moon, which in the end _I_ presented to her."

Then the two of them paused when they finally noticed Raven and Paul watching them blankly and Lydia staring at them with flushed cheeks and glaring eyes.

"Ah Lydia, I didn't notice you there," Edgar said charmingly, before glancing at Paul. "What are you doing in here?"

"We were talking, Edgar, until your petty argument interrupted us," she said irritably, leaning back in her seat and crossing her arms.

"Forgive me, Lydia," Edgar said, strolling into the room and ignoring the livid look he was getting from Kelpie. "I was on my way to speak to you when I discovered this piece of trash stowaway aboard my shipâ€" he gestured to Kelpie, whose eyes flashed red at his comment "â€" I was going to tell you that one, you made me break a rather expensive china plate from Denmark and two, we'll be docking in Ireland early morning."

"You broke that plate yourself, Edgar," Lydia sighed.

"If you say so," said Edgar airily, before turning back to Kelpie.

"You, off my ship now. Youâ€" he pointed to Paul "â€" go back to your room."

"Paul can stay if he wants to," said Lydia irritably, but Paul smiled down at her and said, "It's fine Lydia, it's getting late anyway."

"Indeed," said Edgar almost moodily, as Paul slipped by him to get into the hall. "Raven, please leave us alone for a moment."

Raven bowed to the two of them and exited the room swiftly, and Edgar stepped in and closed the door. Lydia flushed at the realization that once again they were in a bedroom together, alone.

"What is it, Edgar?" Lydia mumbled, staring at her knees.

"Why do you invite every man on this ship into your bedroom but exclude me?" Edgar said almost crossly.

"I didn't invite Kelpie," she pointed out.

"He's not a man," said Edgar firmly. "He's a pain in the arse demon thing." As Lydia gave him a cross look at his comment about Kelpie, Edgar got on one knee and gently took her hand with the moon ring securely on her finger. "You're engaged to me, Lydia, not Raven and certainly not Paul."

"Speaking of that, could you perhaps take this thing off?" Lydia said, trying to keep the sarcasm out of her voice.

"Say please," said Edgar with a charming smile, ash-mauve eyes twinkling.

"Please."

"No," he said happily, bringing her hand up to his mouth and kissing her wrist, parting his lips against her skin. "Your skin is so softâ€|" He gently pulled her hand up to his face and brushed his cheek against it, making Lydia blush.

"Edgar, what are youâ€"?" Lydia started to say, but she stopped her sentence when Edgar turn her palm towards him and kissed it gently, the skin of his lips tickling her slightly.

"I don't know if I can wait until we find the Land of Ibrazel to kiss you Lydia," murmured Edgar against her palm. "You're too alluring."

"Edgarâ€|" Lydia sighed as he rose up and leaned over her neck.

"Let me kiss you here, at least," he whispered, the breath of his words ghosting over the sensitive spots on her throat. Lydia neither complied nor refused but waited in shivering anticipation for Edgar to do something, anythingâ€|

**A/N: ehm. got a lotta reviews and msgs on this thing telling me to move my butt :x forgive me :p lol left it on another cliffhanger,

aren't i the worst? ;)**

4. Warnings and Riddles

Chapter 3

Warnings and Riddles

Atlantic Ocean, 1092 miles from Ireland's Shores, 10:26 pm.

He kept his mouth hovering over Lydia's throat; his breath blew on a spot that sent pleased shivers down Lydia's spine. She briefly wondered whether or not to pull his head closer, just to see how much better it would feel if Edgar actually kissed her there instead of blowing on it. Her arms twitched at her sides but didn't rise.

"Oh, Lydiaâ€|" Edgar murmured, lips barely brushing the spot on her neck and making her shiver violently. "Why won't you let me kiss youâ€|?" He leaned forward further, nudging the tip of his nose against the spot, and Lydia found herself unconsciously arching back to give him better access. "Promise meâ€|"

"P-promise what?" Lydia stammered, her voice breathy.

"When we reach the Land of Ibrazel, you'll let me kiss youâ€|" His voice was baritone, so rich, with a suave toneâ€|

"Yesâ€|"

The word tumbled from her lips without a thought; her mind was foggy and she wasn't even sure what she was agreeing to. Immediately Edgar's soft breath, gentle touches and cooing words were gone, and she blinked only to see him standing a good three feet away from her now, looking astonished. "Y-you mean it?"

Truth be told, now that the fog had lifted she wasn't entirely sure she meant it. But Edgar's pale purple eyes were alight with shock and hope and she just couldn't say no, not anymore. Slowly, a nervous feeling in her chest, she stared at her lap and nodded her head. He positively beamed, lighting up the room, and excited fervour dancing like firelight in his eyes.

"Wonderful, my Lydia!" he exclaimed, pure joy dripping from each word. "I shall leave you to your rest. Goodnightâ€| I'll dream of you," he added on a purr, before practically skipping towards the door and closing it gently.

Lydia blinked in confusion and astonishmentâ€" that simple answer that she may not have even meant made himâ€| that happyâ€| then he just left! After seducing her, no less. She scowled at the door. That cad! That was probably the only reason he even bothered to come in and see herâ€|

"Well, that was fascinating," drawled Nico from atop the dresser, startling her.

"Nicoâ€"" Lydia spluttered. Had he been watching? From the smirk on his whiskery face he had! She went red and threw her pillow at him, knocking him off the dresser and causing him to hiss. "Damn you

Nico, you're worse than Edgar_!"

Edgar, meanwhile, was already strolling down the hall, where Raven had stood waiting for him. Both were silent as Edgar made his way to his own room. The Earl suddenly paused, and were it not for Raven's quick reflexes he would have crashed into Edgar's back.

"Raven," Edgar said suddenly, his voice low and dark, so unlike what he'd sounded like not one minute earlier.

"Lord Edgar," Raven replied curtly, his face impassive.

"I know you love Lydia."

There was a silence as thick as pea soup, as stinging as the salty water they currently sailed on. Then Raven replied, rather stiffly, "I know you do."

Raven couldn't see the utterly murderous look that shadowed his Lord's face, for Edgar kept his back to him. His hands clenched into fists, and for a moment he actually was angry enough to want to whirl around and punch Raven, but he stopped himself for several reasons: one, Raven had sprites behind his eyes and was more than able to tear him to shreds had he the mind, two, this was his effing friend, for the love of God. Edgar exhaled a shuddering breathâ€" what was Lydia doing to him? He was positive that she probably ruled him now, mind and heart; he'd probably murder his friends if she asked him to.

"Will you swear never, in any manner, small or large, to act upon these feelings?" Edgar said in a hard voice.

He almost wished Raven would say no, just to give him an excuse to vent his anger, but Raven being Raven said, "You have my utmost promise, Lord Edgar," without a second's hesitation. The worst part was, Edgar actually believed him. He knew from firsthand experience that Raven would never, ever break a promise to him, not even if his life depended on it.

Wordlessly he turned his back on Raven and strode off to his room, sinking into a squashy chintz armchair and burying his face in his hands. He knew Lydia couldn't help but attract men â€" hell, he knew that better than anyone â€" but it was a burden on his part indeed, especially when she refused to accept that she belonged to him. Between his fingers he glanced at his pocket watch, which was strewn chain and all across the coffee table. It was late, he noticed. They'd be docking early in the morning at Skerries, Dublin, and Edgar had no wish to be exhausted during the search for the Land of Ibrazel.

He slowly and unwillingly got up to change into his nightclothes, hoping they'd find the Land of Ibrazel soon so Edgar could kiss Lydia until Raven and all the others who sought after her turned to dust.

* * *

><p>Town of Skerries, Dublin, Ireland, 6:13 am.

"Wake up, my lovely Lydia!" crooned a voice smooth as silk.

Lydia groaned in reply, rather angrily. She'd been too mortified and nervous to sleep until the wee hours of the morning, and she'd finally gotten to sleep and had been having the _loveliest _dream before Edgar had so rudely interrupted it!"

She froze as Edgar's sultry chuckle wafted around the realisation that _he was_ _in her bed. _Her eyes snapped open and saw with horror a half-dressed (again) Edgar sitting on the edge of her bed, one tapering hand playing idly through her hair.

"Edgar, wh-what the _hell _are you doing here?!" she half shouted, trying to sound furious, but the fact that she stammered diminished that a bit.

Edgar grinned, clearly unfazed by her less than welcoming reaction. "Waking you. We've docked in Ireland, love." He peered over at her nightgown, before she yanked up the covers and shot him a look. "Everyone's dressing now. We're going to head through the town to pick up supplies."

Lydia scowled at him. He'd woken her up for _that_? "Out now, Edgar. You're not watching me dress."

"Very well, Lydia, but next time Iâ€"" he began cheerfully before Lydia hit him in the face with her pillow.

"Out!" she ordered irritably, watching him scoot out the door with a silly grin on his face. She shoved the covers off and slammed the door, saying all the while, "And there won't _be _a next time!"

Lydia was fuming all throughout the time she freshened herself up and donned a lacy dark green velvet gown. She was tying the laces of the dress when Nico peeked out from behind the dresser. "Did you know that you snore?"

"I do not," snapped Lydia.

"I take it you're still angry with me?" Nico said slightly uninterestedly, prowling out into the open now that he was certain there would be no pillows thrown at him.

"For being such a voyeur, or being downright rude?" Lydia said indignantly, grabbing her reticule. "I can't remember which infuriates me more."

Not letting Nico retort Lydia strode across the room quickly, hurling the door open and knocking into Raven. He looked sullen as ever, unaffected as Lydia looked up at him and said, "Oh, sorry Raven."

"Lord Edgar and Paul are waiting for you in the dining room," he said darkly in reply, turning his back on her and strolling down the hall. Lydia followed him quickly, wondering what was eating himâ€" he was acting colder than usual.

Paul was leaned over the table studying his father's painting/map, frowning, which subsided when Lydia entered the dining room.

"Morning, Lydia!"

"Good morning, Paul," said Lydia, looking over his shoulder at the map as well.

"No good morning for me?" grumbled Edgar.

"Technically you already forced it from me when you showed up uninvited in my room," Lydia scowled, and Paul flushed embarrassedly. They discussed their plans as Raven served them their breakfast.

"We're docked at the moment in Skerries Harbour, a little town in Dublin," Edgar was explaining. "Colt Island is just off the coast from here. We're going to find supplies for our journey to the Land of Ibrazel. It might take a while, maybe even a few months."

"There are three points on the map," Paul said, showing Lydia the map. "The first indicates Skerries, where we are now. The third shows Colt Island, of course. The secondâ€œ!" Paul pointed to one of the star-crossed lines that seemed to be on the far left shoreline of the town, "â€œ looks like it's a part of the town. It could be a historical landmark we'll have to examine to find clues for the Land of Ibrazel, or it could be an archive of information."

"Ah, my Lydia, pleasant mornings," drawled Kelpie from behind her, absently reaching over her shoulder with one hand and stealing Paul's bun, which he stuffed into his mouth.

"What the hell did I say about coming on my ship?" Edgar fumed, clutching his fork and knife as if fantasising about plunging them both into the water horse demon.

"Time to go, I think," Lydia said with a frightful pair of glances at Raven and Paul.

They walked down the bridged plank onto the wooden dock of the harbour; a pair of burly fisherman hauling a large net of fish across the deck greeted her with a nod and a thickly-accented, "Welcome, little lass!"

Lydia thought it was polite of them, but Edgar frowned clearly and actually slipped his hand into hers, as if staking a claim. "If the dock is too wet, Lydia, I can carry you," he said suavely.

"You most certainly will not," Lydia hissed, trying to free her hand.

She failed, and he half-pulled her towards the cobblestone streets, which were bustling with tradesmen in stalls, the chatter of happy folk and the cries of seagulls over the whooshing morning tide. Lydia's eyes widened to the size of saucersâ€œ she'd never been to Ireland before. It seemed so different from England. The houses that lined the bay looked more like quaint little colourful cottages, and nobody here was forced into high-class suits and gowns; everyone seemed to be peasants here, and seemed happy in comparison to London's peasants. A pair of children and their father sold fish to passers-by. A woman in a stall was selling handmade embroidery, a diamond-patterned quilt with expertly done stitches spelling out '_Na SceirÃ—_ '.

"What does that mean, Edgar?" Lydia said earnestly, squeezing his hand and forgetting to be petulant about him holding it.

"It means 'the Rocks', " he said with a sideways glance. "The name of the town comes from the Norse word 'skere' and then descended into the Irish word 'na sceirÃ-' , hence 'Skerries'."

Lydia wondered where Edgar learnt all of this, but before she could ask Raven approached seemingly out of nowhere. He looked unbelievably out of place with his crisp black suit and dark-tanned skin. "Lord Edgar, I've found several stalls that sell non-perishable foods. Paul is talking with one of the commoners, trying to find the location of the second point. And Kelpie is eating the locals' fish," he added without a change in tone.

"Excellent," said Edgar, dismissing Raven's last sentence while Lydia giggled at it. "Please excuse me, my loveâ€" I must begin charming the prices down with my suaveness!" With a swift brush of the lips on her knuckles he dashed off into the crowd with Raven, leaving Lydia by herself.

Frowning and rubbing the hand he'd kissed, Lydia turned around to find a stall that sold fruit or satchels, which they'd need come future, before not seconds later Paul bounced up to her, looking positively thrilled.

"I've found the second point!" he beamed, looking even more proud of himself when Lydia too smiled. "Apparently it's an inn, called the Ox and Lamb, run by a part-Merrow called Finnigan."

"Paul, that's fantastic!" Lydia gasped, hugging him without thinking. "This part-Merrow man must have information regarding the Land of Ibrazel! He might even know where it is!"

She and a now stiff and red-faced Paul combed through the crowd, looking for Edgar and Raven, who seemed to have disappeared. Along the way Paul purchased a collection of sturdy fruits that wouldn't bruise easily and would take a while to rot â€" things like apples, plums and even a slice of watermelon that Paul practically begged her to allow him to buy â€" and a collection of canteens.

"Are yeh lot goin' on one of them couple's adventures or summat?" a beefy looking man had grunted in their direction, upon buying a pair of moleskin satchels. "Only you've got about an 'undred of survival stuff."

"Actually she belongs to me, not him," Edgar said smoothly, striding up behind the two red-faced friends and leading Lydia away with one hand on the small of her back. "We've found all that we could for nowâ€" I see you have as well," he added, clearly impressed at the merchandise Lydia and Paul had found. "Lovely."

"Paul found the second point on the map, Edgar," said Lydia, with a proud grin towards Paul (who flushed again). "It's an Irish inn run by a part-Merrow. I'd say that's our next stop."

"Fantastic," beamed Edgar, echoing Lydia's original praise. "We're that much closer to the Land of Ibrazel alreadyâ€" I can't wait to kiss you!"

Lydia's excited grin blanched. "_Edgar that's not what I meantâ€" "_

"Of course it wasn't," said Edgar dismissively, grabbing her hand with his free one, as the other held up bags of non-perishables. "Onward, my angel!"

"Don't call me that," Lydia hissed, but went 'onward' nonetheless.

Raven and Kelpie waited for them in the centre of the bustling market square, standing next to a coach and horses. A man with a bushy beard and a kind face sat atop on the bench, gripping the reins and tipping his hat in their direction.

"He's agreed to take us to the second point on the map," Raven said sullenly.

"The Ox and Lamb, please," said Lydia, with another grin at a bashful-looking Paul.

"Will do, lovely lass and gentlemen," the man said in his Irish burr.

Edgar scowled yet again and escorted Lydia into the coach with one hand still tightly gripping hers. "Edgar, let go, I don't need your hand," Lydia muttered.

"I need yours to live," said Edgar almost simply, and Lydia huffed as he, Paul and Raven clambered in as well, leaving Kelpie behind as he'd, "Rather stay behind with the fish."

The Ox and Lamb, Lydia saw in utter astonishment, was a positively beaming little building painted brilliant white, with intensely green ivy snaking its way up the walls. There was a garden round the corner, almost completely obscured by the inn itself, but what Lydia could see was beautiful, with blooming flowers and twittering birds.

"Thank yeah, gentlefolk," said their coachman graciously as Edgar tossed him a whole pound.

"Everyone in Ireland is so nice," Lydia beamed as they climbed up the rickety steps and opened the inn's door.

The inside of the Ox and Lamb could only be described as 'clean'. Abnormally so. All the inn's Lydia had ever dared to enter in England were dirty and reeking of stale beer and hops. This one radiated cleanliness and class, and smelled pleasantly of jasmine. An extremely old man stood behind the counter, absently rummaging through shelves. He looked up when the bell on the door rang at their entrance.

"Welcome!" he said, in a voice so serene and calm Lydia was startled; she'd been expecting a croak from someone as ancient looking as him.

"Are you Finnigan?" she asked, and couldn't help but smile when he positively beamed with joy.

"Aye, comely little lass, I be Finnigan!" he said happily.

Edgar looked sullen again" Lydia tried counting the times he'd gotten jealous from the polite Irish folk that day, but had lost count.

"We come because of the Land of Ibrazel, kind sir," said Paul, handing him the map.

A look shadowed over Finnigan's face. His smile had disappeared. "Upstairs. Quickly. We'll talk there."

Lydia and the group followed him as he struggled to climb up a set of steep white steps, leading to a series of bedrooms. Finnigan leaned heavily against the railing; his face looked rather sunken in.

"I'm assuming you have information for us regarding the Land of Ibrazel?" Edgar said.

Finnigan grimaced. "Aye, the Land o' Ibrazel indeed. Was me home a good couple o' decades ago, till the Merrow banished us to Europe. 'Half-breeds', they called us."

Lydia felt a stab of sympathy. "Please, sir, Edgar here is the Blue Knight Earl. Heâ€"

"No he ain't," Finnigan interrupted, frowning at Edgar. "Yeh don't have the sight."

"The Merrow and the sword have accepted him," said Lydia with irritation. The way Finnigan had denied it had made him sound a bit like Ulysses.

"Yeh're a fairy doctor," Finnigan abruptly changed the subject, staring at her green eyes.

"Yes," she said, trying not to sound impatient.

There was a roundabout pause, in which Paul fidgeted nervously with his lapels and Edgar huffed.

"The Earl and the Fairyâ€|" Finnigan muttered, sounding almost amused, before he turned to a cabinet and pulled out a scroll. "I have Ibrazel's riddle here fer yeh."

Lydia and Edgar leaned in together, reading the spiky black writing clearly done with an inkwell and quill.

"These walls we built are crumbling down

We're forced to live deep underground

One X and two I's across the stance

We are earl and fairy; shall we dance?

Our way is lit by fallen stars

Caged in lanterns like iron bars

Our fairy green and spark of red
Her Majesty of Wings is dead
Our legend says the end is soon
Thunder clouds and a black paper moon
Unlock the torso with unseen eyes
And find the source of Ibrazel's cries."

Lydia and Edgar looked up at the same time and found their faces far too close for comfortâ€" their noses were almost touching. Lydia looked away, blushing, and Edgar simply stared down at her through half-lidded eyes.

"Earl and fairyâ€!" Edgar echoed Finnigan, looking inspired. "Well, at least we know we're the right people for the job." He frowned down, rereading the poem-riddle. "What could this mean?"

"Well, it's like the riddle for the Merrow's sword," Lydia said earnestly, smiling up at him, leaving the fact that he swooned a bit at her smile unnoticed. "We know where to start in a broader sense. Colt Island isn't that largeâ€" we'll figure it out."

Edgar's previously tensed face softened into something reminiscent of gentle adoration. "Ah, Lydia, I love you."

Lydia flushed and was about to tell him off before Finnigan interrupted. "Yeh're all welcome teh stay the night."

"What's your fare?" asked Raven, as Edgar was now busy trying to nuzzle his nose into Lydia's ear.

"I'll let yeh stay fer free, if yeh take me with yeh."

"To the Land of Ibrazel!" exclaimed Lydia, trying to fend off Edgar and talk at the same time.

"Aye. If yeh really are the Blue Knight Earl, the Merrow will let me go back home," said Finnigan, looking hopefully sad.

"Of course," smiled Lydia.

Finnigan beamed again for a brief moment, before he said, "I'll be right back with yer keys," and hurried crookedly down the steep steps.

They were that much closer to the Land of Ibrazel, Lydia realised, and in that moment while Edgar was playing idly with her hair she tried to block out a fantasy of Edgar dipping her back and kissing her with all the passion she knew he had.

**A/N: Yeah I know it's been ten months but come on my lovelies: was it worth the wait? I've had a lot of angry people on my back about Earl and Fairy's Secret, but I've kind of got a lot on my plate right now: my book's being published (Second editing stage :D) I've got like 4 other ongoing stories and I'm in my last year of high

school... and the last time I posted a chapter, I was two months away from being shipped to a group home that doesn't allow laptops or internet. I'm out, thank god, but I'm still swamped. Anyway, I had a BLAST writing that riddle - soo much fun! - this story's only going to have like 10 more chapters, 13 in total, and the smut isn't gonna come till like chapter eight... thank yous go out to phantom-san, Little Miss Haine, Maiden Marvel (STOP STARING AT ME! ps i hope this chapter answered your question), ShiningPurpleStars, Emerald, girlie, LoverGirl171793, OfBrokenGlass (Awesome name), MadGirl103, ICanCYou (haha), Lydia, MeatAngel, Sarah Juska, shadowkitten11, Guest, See Through the Mist, kurage-ichigo-chan, NarutoMangafan, A-Source-Of-Hope, kookie-monster, Brithany twice, xSapphiresxRosesxFanx, Makoandkorra, another Guest and hahas. Christ you guys reviewed a lot! XD love you! **

5. Shall We Dance?

Chapter 4

Shall We Dance?

The Ox and Lamb, Town of Skerries, Dublin, Ireland, 5:21 am.

Upon returning Finnigan had only appeared with three sets of keys, and when Lydia had inquired as to why, she'd nearly died of embarrassment when Finnigan said he'd thought she and Edgar would be sharing a room. Now it was the next morning, far too early in the morning. She lay clad in her nightgown between the cotton sheets, having woken and unable to get back to sleep. Thinking about the possibility of sharing a room, a bed with Edgar, made her whole face flush with embarrassment. Had Edgar been there at the moment he probably would have rolled over and thrown one of his legs around her waist, pressing his front into her back. He would have buried his face sleepily in her neck and trailed kisses down to her shoulder, murmuring sweet nothings into her ear and slowly slipping the already-lowered sleeve of her nightgown further down her body untilâ€”

In the same moment Lydia flopped onto her back and was staring at the ceiling, scolding herself for thinking like a pervert, a loud and frustrated sigh wafted through the open window of her bedroom. She sat up. From her room was a fantastic overhead view of Finnigan's garden, which bloomed and blossomed with green plants and vibrant flowers. Lounging on one of the benches was Edgar, who had the riddle scroll in his hands. From this angle, Lydia couldn't see his face.

She dressed herself quickly and tiptoed past Paul and Raven's rooms, trying not to wake them, and hurried down the steps out into the fresh, crisp morning air. The ocean saline wafted in the air.

"Morning, love," Edgar said when she approached him, quickly sitting up straight so she could sit beside him. "I hope I didn't wake you."

"No, not like yesterday morning, right?" Lydia said sarcastically, and he grinned stupidly at the memory. "You didn'tâ€” I was already

awake." She glanced at the scroll. "You're trying to figure it out?"

Edgar nodded absently, leaning over to inhale her scent. "Mm, chamomile!"

Lydia leaned away from him. "Stop sniffing me."

"But you're delicious," he purred, making her shudder.

Lydia brushed him away, trying not to look too disgruntled, and glanced down at his outstretched palm in which sat a violet ribbon. At first she frowned at it, wondering why he had a ribbon, before she recognised it as one of her own—the one she'd tied around Ibrazel's invisible key almost two months ago.

She read aloud, "_These walls we built are crumbling down/We're forced to live deep underground/One X and two I's across the stance/We are earl and fairy; shall we dance?_"

"We are Earl and Fairy; shall we dance?" Edgar repeated on a dreamy murmur.

"These walls we built!" Lydia mumbled. "This last part here sounds like Roman numerals. One 'X' and two 'I's' like the number twelve."

"Who's 'we', though?" the Merrow?

"They don't live underground. Who lives underground?"

"Maybe they mean the people who built the walls. It could just mean they're buried underneath them."

"Then they wouldn't be 'living', though."

"True. This first part sounds like the ruins of something, I believe," Edgar said, pointing.

Lydia suddenly jumped up from the bench, gazing off into the distance. "Look, Edgar!" She pointed towards a hulking green lumpy shape that was Colt Island. "It looks like there are ruins over on the island!"

"We'll sail over on _Amnesty _and have a look," Edgar said excitedly, sweeping her into a swift embrace. "Let's wake everyone up."

Lydia pushed him away and shot him a look. "That's rude."

"I don't care; I want to get to the Land of Ibrazel before today ends, lest I go insane," said Edgar smartly, striding towards the inn with one hand clamped around hers.

Lydia frowned at him, half-sure he was joking—her uncertainty grew completely when he looked at her, dead serious. She racked through her brains to find something that would occupy Edgar, but she couldn't think of anything—except seducing him, which she would never do_.

"But I want to sit outside with you," Lydia burst out, blushing from

head to toe when Edgar froze. He didn't turn around. Saying it was utterly humiliating, but what choice did she have? She had to think about the othersâ€¦ Raven never got more than three hours' sleep and Paul most certainly _needed _to sleep in, ever since Bansheeâ€¦

"I know you're lying to stop me from waking up the others," Edgar said sadly, and she looked up in alarm but saw he was smiling. "Nevertheless, I'll humour you. Anything to spend more time alone with my Lydia."

Lydia flushed again and was just about to find the ground particularly interesting when Finnigan limped out into the garden, squinting at them in the morning sunlight. "Aye, yeh two! C'mon in, then, yer friends are up an' we're servin' brekkie!"

Edgar pouted with disappointment and Lydia rolled her eyes at him as the two of them obediently followed the hobbling Finnigan into the dining room. Raven showed no sign of joining them, standing stiff as a board in the corner with his hands clasped behind his back (as per usual) and Paul was sitting at the corner with a purring Nico in his lap.

"Good morning, everyone," Lydia greeted them politely, allowing Edgar to graciously pull out her chair so she could sit. "Edgar and I may have a lead on the first part of Finnigan's poem."

"Really?" Paul said, smiling in thanks as Raven served them their breakfast despite Finnigan's grumbling.

Edgar nodded over his cup of tea. "The first line of the poem sounds like ruins, and Lydia and I believe there are ruins on Colt Island."

"Then that's the first place we'll look," Paul beamed.

They finished their breakfast, and Finnigan got a few of his things before they waved down another carriage to take them back to the docks. It was a bit squished inside the carriage with their extra passenger, who also had a cane that took up a good amount of the legroom. Once they'd arrived, they forced themselves out of the carriage and tipped the driver before seeking out Kelpie, much to Edgar's dismay. They found him lounging on the shore, making the surrounding fishermen nervous.

"Kelpie!" Lydia called after him, waving her hand to get his attention.

He sat up and grinned at her as suavely as he could with his hair full of sand. "Good morning, my Lydia!"

"_Mine_," she heard Edgar growl behind her. Pretending she didn't hear that (and that it didn't prompt a spark of lust at his possessiveness) Lydia continued, "We're going to Colt Island!"

"I'll meet you there, my fairy," Kelpie said, before diving headfirst into the water and not resurfacing, much to the shock of the local onlookers.

"We could have just left him behind," Edgar said with a sigh.

Lydia looked at him pointedly. "Edgar, don't be rude."

They boarded Amnesty again and gathered together on the top deck for a short boat ride to the neighbouring island. Once they'd docked successfully somewhere without too many rocks, they stepped out onto the island. It was rather small, about the same circumference as Edgar's ship, but directly in the centre were clearly ruins of some kind of ancient circular structure, a bit like a very small coliseum.

Kelpie was already crouched on the shore, waiting for them, and naturally the moment they arrived he jumped up and drawled, "You took ages."

"It's a ship, Kelpie, what do you expect?" Lydia sighed, before Edgar could retort with something rude.

Gathering up her skirts so they wouldn't catch on any brambles, Lydia headed over to the ruins to investigate them, the others close by in her wake. The ground inside the ruins was flat and made of the same kind of stone, circular and covered with a thick layer of dirt.

"Something's underneath the soil," Edgar said, crouching down and brushing away a bit of the dirt. His ministrations revealed an inch-deep indent in the stone in a perfect curve, the trail leading further underneath the dirt. "We have to dig away the earth."

Kelpie, Paul, Raven and even Finnigan got on their hands and knees and began to sift away the dirt. Lydia rolled up her sleeves and did the same, much to Edgar's disapproval. With a pointed look Lydia announced, "I may be a lady, Edgar, but my helping will make this go faster. Then we'll get to the Land of Ibrazel a little bit quicker," she added, flushing when she realised she was technically bribing him.

He opened his mouth as though to protest, but apparently the prospect of kissing her earlier was too much to reject. So, with a disapproving look, Edgar shut his mouth with a click and continued to dig. Eventually the damp earth sifted away and Kelpie managed to manipulate the ocean into sending a wave of water spilling over their handiwork, washing away the last of the dirt. When the tide returned to normal, Lydia gasped.

The incision mark within the ruins was a giant, circular clock face, with slightly elevated stone circles where the number markings were. A thirteenth circle was directly in the middle where the clock hands would normally be. Elegantly carved Roman numerals were situated on the circles on the outer edges of the clock face.

"Everyone, keep out of the clock," Edgar ordered, and everybody took a step back. "We have to figure out precisely what it is we must do." Pulling out the scroll again, he read aloud the first lines with a murmur. "These walls we built are crumbling down/We're forced to live deep underground/One X and two I's across the stance/We are earl and fairy; shall we dance?"

"So, we start at twelve?" Lydia suggested.

"Then, what's the inner circle for?" Paul countered.

"Indeed," Edgar muttered. "I believe the entrance toâ€œ wherever it is we're supposed to go, is beneath this clock, and we must start at the inner circleâ€œ""

"â€œ before making an X and two I's across the clock face," Lydia finished his sentence for him. "How do we do that?"

"We are Earl and Fairy," Edgar smiled, before reaching out his hand towards her for her to take. "Shall we dance?"

At first Lydia didn't understand. Glancing between his hand, his face and the clock, she frowned, before her eyes lit up. "Oh!"

They, the Earl and the Fairy, had to dance their way 'across the stance' togetherâ€œ both of them would be needed. Hesitating before taking his hand, Lydia allowed Edgar to lead her into the clock face, carefully avoiding stepping on the outer circles. Before they stepped on the inner circle and began the riddle, Edgar turned to her and said earnestly, "We'll have to make both lines in the X at two different times."

Lydia nodded in understanding, and took a deep breath as they both stepped on the inner circle. It lowered beneath them at once with a faint creaking sound, and the rim of the circle began to glow faintly blue. Swallowing her embarrassment at her proximity to Edgar, she placed one hand on his, as though they were beginning a waltz. Instead of placing her other one on his shoulder, Lydia and Edgar both stepped away from each other, still holding hands, and spread out so they were forming a perfect line, Edgar stepping on the stone marked 'XI' and Lydia on the one marked 'V'. Both of those stones sank down at the same time, beginning to glow blue just like the centremost one. With a swift movement Lydia and Edgar both returned to the centre circle, before spreading out again, Lydia on the 'II' stone and Edgar on the 'VII' one, and they glowed blue as well as the two of them returned to the centre circle a second time.

"Two I's," Edgar murmured into her hair.

Lydia nodded and suppressed a shiver. They stretched themselves in another line, this one with Lydia on the 'XII' and Edgar on the 'VIII'. The two stones didn't glow blue, and for a split second of panic, Lydia thought they'd gotten it wrongâ€œ but the other stones hadn't stopped glowing. Then she remembered they had to do two I's, and switched positions so Edgar was on the 'XII' stone and Lydia on the 'VIII' one. This time, both stones sank, as did the ones untouched.

Edgar used the sudden creaking noise and the bright blue light as an excuse to haul Lydia out of the circle to safety and hold her closeâ€œ she was too preoccupied in watching the outer rim of the clock face holding the circles turn around her to tell him off. After a brief moment, the outer rim sank into the ground, slowly turning into a pair of spiral steps sinking underground.

Paul let out a whoop. "You did it!"

Lydia beamed at her friendsâ€œ even at Finnigan, who was simply gaping at the newly revealed passageway with bulging eyes. "I can't

believe it worked!"

"Enough chatter, let's get on with it," Kelpie said a bit rudely, already heading down the steps with a look of disinterest.

Edgar scowled and opened his mouth to say something no doubt completely and utterly rude, but Lydia elbowed him before he could say anything. Finnigan hobbled rather excitedly into the tunnel, and Raven waited until Lydia, Edgar and Paul had all started down the steps before heading in himself.

A/N: I know it's been forever, but nice to see you all again :3 Thank you-s go out to Rainbows and flowers (well, technically Rainbows and flowers' friend) Kaililovesanime, VampireAreej like four times XD, magicalnana, CeruleanKiss (lovely name), dragosgirlfriend, .Death, xSapphirexRosesxFanx, Kuroi-Akuma-no-Okami, candycloud8 whose review was just positively DARLING, darien and Thani. The updates for this may or may not be long in between, I'm not sure- I've got a DW series going on that I'm pretty dedicated to (DOCTOR WHO FOREVER!) so I can't guarantee any quick chapters, but I may or may not get days like this, where I pop open this story and remember 'hey I should probably work on this' and then write out the whole chapter in, like, a day ^^ anywhoooo, hope you like!

End
file.